

Message Text

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SUBJECT: U.S. PROPERTY DETAINED BY HUNGARIAN BORDER OFFICIALS

REF: BUCHAREST 6629

1. HUNGARIAN CUSTOMS OFFICIALS CONFISCATED ITEMS IN QUESTION SINCE THEY WERE IN EXCESS OF HUNGARIAN CUSTOMS DUTY-FREE IMPORT VALUE LIMITS FOR GIFTS TO PERSONS IN HUNGARY AND MRS. PATAKI HAD APPARENTLY NOT DECLARED THEM AS TRANSIT GOODS. HAD MRS. PATAKI TRANSITED BUDAPEST AIRPORT BY AIR TO ROMANIA, SHE COULD NOT HAVE LEFT INTERNATIONAL TRANSIT AREA AND PASS CUSTOMS. APPARENTLY SHE DID LEAVE AIRPORT IN ORDER TO TAKE SURFACE TRANSPORT TO ROMANIA. THIS WAS AN "ENTRY" FOR CUSTOMS PURPOSES, REQUIRING CUSTOMS CHECKS. HAD SHE DECLARED THE GOODS AS TRANSIT GOODS, AUTHORITIES WOULD HAVE ALLOWED HER TO EXPORT THEM FROM HUNGARY UPON DEPARTURE, AFTER REQUIRING HER TO POST A DEPOSIT UPON ENTRY, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO HER UPON DEPARTURE.

2. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER MRS. PATAKI ATTEMPTED TO DECLARE THE GOODS IN QUESTION. ACCORDING TO HUNGARIAN MFA, SHE DID NOT.

3. HUNGARIANS APPLY INLAND VALUATION FOR CUSTOMS PURPOSES. A SIMPLE CALCULATOR COSTING \$25 IN U.S. IS
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THEREFORE VALUED AT 5,000-8,000 FORINTS HERE (\$300 - \$400). WITH TWO CALCULATORS AND TWO RADIOS MRS. PATAKI WAS WELL IN EXCESS OF ANY DUTY-FREE POSSIBILITY, HAD SHE INTENDED TO BRING THE GOODS TO HUNGARY. IN CASE OF TRANSIT HOWEVER, SHE WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TAKE THE GOODS OUT IF ABOVEMENTIONED CUSTOMS GUARANTEE HAD BEEN DEPOSITED.

4. MFA BUDAPEST HAS ADVISED US MRS. PATAKI MAY APPEAL CONFISCATION BY WRITING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AN EXPRESS-REGISTERED LETTER TO CUSTOMS OFFICE NR. 2 (2. SZAMU VAMHIVATAL) AT FERIHEGY AIRPORT, BUDAPEST. SHE SHOULD NARRATE IN DETAIL WHAT TRANSPIRED AT CUSTOMS CONTROL, AND EXPLAIN BOTH THE INTENDED PURPOSE OF THE ITEMS IN QUESTION AND WHY SHE EXCEEDED THE ALLOWABLE HUNGARIAN CUSTOMS LIMITS. SHE SHOULD DO THIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, EVEN THOUGH MFA INDICATED THAT SINCE SHE IS OUTSIDE HUNGARY, HER APPEAL WOULD BE ACCEPTED EVEN IF FILED SOMEWHAT LATER THAN THE NORMAL 15-DAY TIME LIMIT.

5. APPEAL WOULD BE FORWARDED TO HIGHER AUTHORITY. EXCEEDINGLY UNLIKELY MATTER WOULD BE DECIDED BY JANUARY 20, WHEN MRS. PATAKI EXPECTS TO BE TRANSITING BUDAPEST BACK TO U.S. HOWEVER SHE SHOULD AT THAT TIME INQUIRE ABOUT MATTER AT FERIHEGY CUSTOMS OFFICE.

6. FYI AND RELAY TO MRS. PATAKI AT YOUR DISCRETION. UNDER THEIR LAW HUNGARIANS HAD RIGHT TO HOLD MRS. PATAKI'S PASSPORT AND REQUIRE HER TO REMAIN IN HUNGARY PENDING OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS WHICH WOULD HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY RESULTED IN FINE OF SEVERAL HUNDRED DOLLARS AND CONFISCATION OF GOODS IN QUESTION. THIS IS PROCEDURE HUNGARIANS USUALLY FOLLOW IN SUCH CASES, AND IN FACT WE KNOW OF ONE CITIZEN, INTENDING AN XMAS VISIT TO ROMANIAN RELATIVES, WHO WAS SO CONSTRAINED TO SPEND THE HOLIDAYS HERE WHEN DISCOVERED TO BE TRANSPORTING FIVE CALCULATORS. EVEN IN THE LIKELY EVENT MRS. PATAKI'S ITEMS ARE NOT RETURNED TO HER, SHE WILL BE RELATIVELY LUCKY TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HAVE HER VISIT TO ROMANIA AND AVOID PAYMENT OF A STIFF HUNGARIAN CUSTOMS FINE.

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MCAULIFFE

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